Four Corners Ozone Task Force

Steering Committee Meeting November 20, 2002 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM Farmington, New Mexico

Meeting Minutes

Overview

Members attending

13 members present, see attached sheet

Issues Voted on

Vote 1

Should it be recommended to local government officials in San Juan County that they sign an Early Action Compact with the New Mexico Environment Department - Air Quality Bureau and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 6?

Yes: 12 Abstain: 1

Should it be recommended to neighboring states and tribes that they sign an Early Action Compact with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 6?

Yes: 10 Abstain: 3

Full Meeting Minutes

Introductions

Julia Barnes, facilitator of the Four Corners Ozone Task Force, began the meeting at 2:00 pm by welcoming attendees and explaining the meeting agenda. The meeting was an official meeting of the Ozone Task Force Steering Committee and it was kept open to other Task Force members and the general public. Julia also gave a brief background of each of the two callers who were scheduled to join the meeting by phone and help explain the requirements and consequences of Early Action Compacts (EACs). An EAC is an agreement that the communities of San Juan County, New Mexico can choose to develop and sign as a proactive measure in addressing the issue of elevated levels of ozone (smog) that have been monitored in the county.

At Julia's request, attendees introduced themselves, gave their affiliation, and each person told the group something unique about themselves.

Early Action Compact Discussion

Sandra Ely, Chief of the New Mexico Environment Department's Air Quality Bureau, spent about 15 minutes giving a broad introduction and overview of Early Action Compacts. She discussed several milestones of an EAC, and briefly described the emissions inventory and modeling that would be completed under an Early Action Compact. Highlighting the importance of funding, Sandra also indicated that receiving additional funds from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would require matching funding from the state of New Mexico. She stated that \$50,000 was already granted to New Mexico from EPA to begin an emissions inventory for San Juan County. Rough estimates indicate funding in the range of \$250,000 - \$500,000 would be necessary to carry out the obligations under an Early Action Compact.

Two callers joined the meeting at approximately 2:40 pm to explain more about EACs. Vickie Patton with Environmental Defense's Rocky Mountain office in Boulder, CO, and Tom Diggs with EPA - Region 6 in Dallas, TX have both been involved in development and deployment of EACs in other areas.

Tom Diggs spoke first, taking care to highlight the importance of signing an EAC by the December 31, 2002 deadline. He explained that an EAC is a voluntary program incorporating early efforts to achieve and maintain the 8-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone. If an EAC is signed, a local plan is developed and incorporated into the state's State Implementation Plan (SIP), after which it is law. Tom described how the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality developed the protocol for EACs with assistance from EPA - Region 6 and input from a variety of environmental groups. EPA -Region 6 has received EACs from five areas: Austin, TX; San Antonio, TX; Longview (Northeast), TX; Shreveport, LA; and Tulsa, OK. For more information, Tom recommended the following website: www.epa.gov/airlinks/airlinks4.html. Tom finished his presentation by discussing the benefits of staying in attainment, including the health benefits, avoidance of the stigma of becoming a non-attainment area, less regulatory oversight, and the option for local and state authorities to continue with flexible approaches to improving the area's air quality.

Vickie Patton addressed the group next. She began by highlighting the importance of an April 15, 2004 deadline for designation of 8-hour ozone non-attainment areas that resulted from a lawsuit between EPA and environmental groups. Vickie stated that an EAC is a "window of opportunity" for a community or a group of communities to be proactive in addressing elevated ozone levels. She informed the group that there is a March 2003 conference planned to discuss innovative strategies to achieve and maintain the 8-hour NAAQS for ozone. Vickie believes that in the case of San Juan County, an EAC is a good opportunity for maximum local control in a proactive approach to the ozone issue.

After both presenters spoke, the floor was opened up for questions from members of the Task Force and Steering Committee. Topics covered included the time remaining before the EAC deadline, what funding EPA has available for areas that sign an EAC, the

control strategies chosen for inclusion in the plan developed under an EAC, and protocol for areas that sign an EAC but cannot meet the required milestones.

Steering Committee Issues: Voting

Julia Barnes led a discussion on the voting protocol for the Steering Committee. Issues of concern included what topics should be voted on, who should have voting rights, and whether or not to include Colorado representatives in the decision affecting New Mexico.

It was concluded that on a given issue, the 18 members that presently comprise the Steering Committee should each be allowed one vote with an option to abstain or request more time to review the materials.

Before voting whether or not this recommendation should be made, the Steering Committee listed the Pros and Cons of trying to get an EAC for San Juan County signed before the deadline. The results are listed below:

Pros

Avoid non-attainment
Avoid stigma of non-attainment
Control destiny
May not have this chance again
Cost is less when compared to non-attainment
Industry can help select local controls
Leverage EPA for more money
Motivate regional attention and collaboration
EPA will witness community make effort to address issue

Cons

Time limitation
Commitment
Lose do-nothing option
Will not be fair if no participation from other sources
Do not fully understand cons

Issues voted on

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During closing discussion, representatives of the New Mexico Environment Department committed to developing an Early Action Compact for San Juan County and approaching the appropriate government officials for approval prior to the December 31, 2002 deadline. They also stated they could recommend to that neighboring states and tribes that they sign their own EACs with their respective EPA regions.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Ozone Task Force Steering Committee was scheduled for December 11, 2002, 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, location TBD. The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Steering Committee Members		In attendance	Vote 1 See below	Vote 2 See below
		14 present, 4 absent		
Environmental Activist Groups	Jan Reese	No		
	Alan Rolston	Yes	Yes	Yes
Local government	Tony Atkinson	No		
	Maude Grantham- Richards	No		
Health groups (One as an alternate)	Nathan Ballenger	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Karen Bedwell Herhan	No		
	Brooks Taylor	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industry	David Bays	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Bruce Gantner	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Nancy Norem/ Richard Grimes alternate	Yes	Abstain	Abstain
	Jim Rhodes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Air Quality Bureaus	Virgil Frazier	Yes	Yes	Abstain
	Christopher Lee	Yes	Yes	Abstain
	Roger Polisar	Yes	Yes	Yes
Federal Interest	Jim Ramakka/ Dale Wirth	Yes	Yes	Yes
	National Parks Service	Yes		
Community Groups	Jack Scott	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Charlene Anderson	Yes	Yes	Yes